



# MAKING A SPLASH

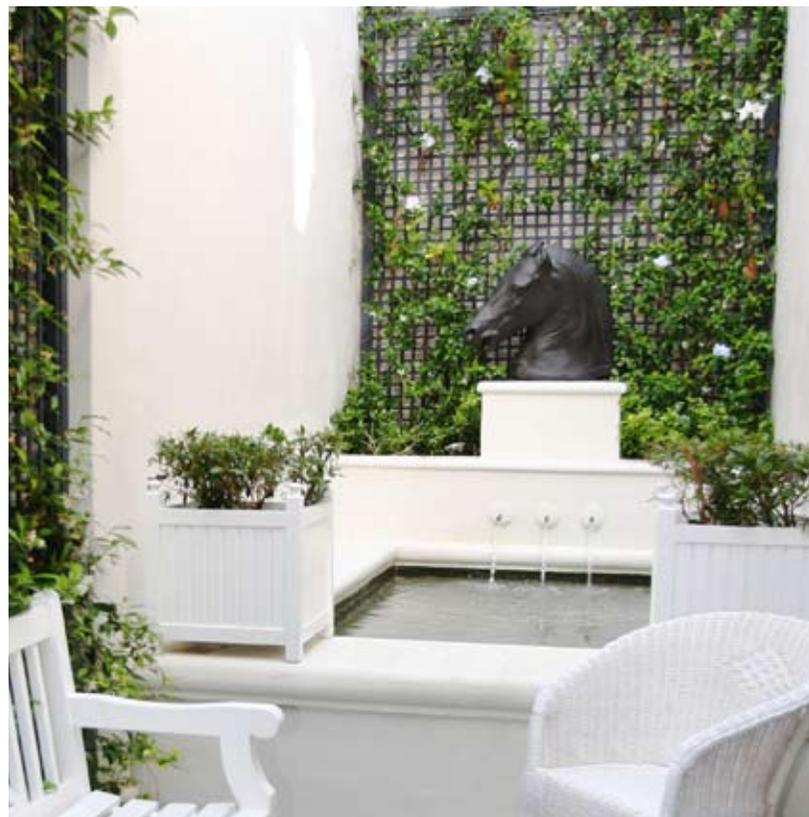
Landscape designer Franchesca Watson on the merits of giving your water feature its due, and how

**NOW THAT WE ARE** using less irrigation water in our gardens, water features have taken on a new importance. Integrating water into a drier-looking garden takes a lot more thought and sensitivity – it needs to be viewed as a treasure, not an abundant presence in the garden. So rather than lakes and waterfalls, we should be heading for much more contained water, almost like a storage vessel implying the carrying of something of incredible value. What I really mean are elements like troughs, containers, wall fountains and rills. Anything that looks like it stores water rather than just letting it through.

This type of water feature is actually so easy. I often convert pots into water features, just add a pump to give a little water spout and a light for magic in the evening. You can even put them on either side of a front door. One starts with a great container, either seal the drainage holes (and around the hole carrying the electric cables) or order the pots

without drainage holes and then you can drill the hole for the cables wherever convenient. I particularly hate seeing any cables or pipes, so I often use a copper pipe up the middle of the pot ending just below the water surface. You can then adjust the height of the water spout with the size of the pump or a little regulator. Alternatively just fill with water and add waterlilies, no electricity required.

Troughs are often best against a wall with water flowing into them from the wall via a brass spout or old tap. Rummage around the junk stores for lovely alternatives. Or one can have spouts within the water – not too high and trashy-splashy please. Do something with the wall behind it – change the texture in the area of the water feature, add mouldings to frame the space behind the trough, a false wall in front of the existing wall, or frame it with creepers – anything to draw the eye to the whole picture. Some kind of boundary to the trough, like coping



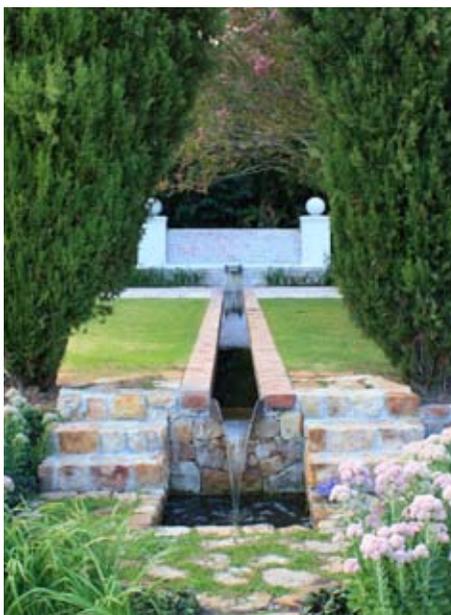
or moulding with an overhang, gives an edge to bring the internal waterproofing up to and please note – edging should be on all four sides – nothing worse than a wobbly painted line where waterproofing begins and painting ends on the back wall. Spouts, taps or other water-delivering elements should really only be one third of the water up the rear wall. Most people make the mistake of putting them too high, this becomes visually discordant and affects the sound of the water so that one wants to run to the loo.

Rills, although truly spiritual (think Alhambra), are more difficult technically and visually. The water needs to run downhill, gurgling along, so the falls have to be carefully thought through. The water needs to begin and end somewhere, for example from a wall fountain, flow along the rill and fall into another water body from which the water gets pumped back up again. And remember, a rill is essentially an architectural element – it will look rather silly beginning or ending in a natural pond.

Keeping the water clear needs a little ecosystem – plants to act as filters and fish (if you wish). Otherwise you will need filters or chemicals. If after a few months the water does not clear naturally, there are organic preparations that can be added available from your garden centre. Or there is an indigenous water plant called Vallisneria, which works a treat. Arums can also be grown standing in water along with waterlilies, water irises, and water ferns. Be careful, there are a number of horrible invaders like water hyacinth, water lettuce, parrots feather and kariba weed.

■ Franchesca Watson ☎ 082 808 1287

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PHOTOGRAPHS: WHITE WATER FEATURE SUPPLIED BY JOHN JACOB ZWIEGELAAR, HEIDI BERTISH